

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, April 1, 2008

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# WSU center focuses on cracking social issues Detroit

BY ROBIN ERB • FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER • April 1, 2008

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A new research center at Wayne State University will connect number-crunchers, policy-makers and social workers as they tackle Detroit's -- and possibly the nation's -- thorniest social issues, its organizers said Monday.

## ADVERTISEMENT

The goal: improving the lives of poor and disadvantaged people.

Though WSU faculty previously provided social work expertise, the new Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research is staffed with four full-time researchers who generate information that helps shape public policy in areas like poverty, child abuse, health care, criminal justice and foster care.

Ismael Ahmed, director of Michigan's Department of Human Services, attended Monday's official announcement at WSU. He said the issues the center will explore are "almost a perfect alignment" with issues at DHS and suggested big changes at DHS in the next three years.

The center, located within WSU's School of Social Work, opens at a crucial time, said Joanne Sobeck, the center's director.

"Our neighborhoods, our city, our state faces an economic downturn that weighs heavily on our people and the communities," she said. "The time is right for this kind of research because social workers are well placed to help the growing need."

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Bay City woman paroled after eight years

Tuesday, April 01, 2008

By **CRYSTAL McMORRIS**

**charmon@bc-times.com | 894-9643**

A Bay City woman who avoided trial on first-degree murder charges by pleading no-contest to voluntary manslaughter in the death of an infant in 1998 has been paroled from prison.

Mary A. Dobert, 40, served eight years in prison before being paroled last week. She had been sentenced to four to 15 years in the death of Crystal Harrison, a 6-month old girl from Akron who was in her care.

Crystal died March 13, 1998, from severe head injuries suffered two days previously while at Dobert's east-side home day care.

Dobert called 911 that day to report that the baby fell from a high chair and landed on her face.

She was arrested in August 1999, after the state attorney general's office filed charges. The Bay County Prosecutor's office passed the case to the state, because Dobert had a relative working in the county office.

An autopsy concluded that Crystal died of blunt-force head trauma consistent with that which occurs when a baby is shaken or slammed into a hard object. She had three skull fractures and bleeding around the brain.

A pathologist said the injuries were inconsistent with a fall from a high chair.

Dobert pleaded no-contest to voluntary manslaughter on Feb. 3, 2000, after a jury had been seated to try to first-degree murder case.

Crystal was the daughter of Deborah and Don Harrison of Akron.

The Times was unable to reach Dobert.

Terms of her parole include not providing care to or residing with any child under 18, not consuming alcohol, not leaving the state, not owning a gun and not associating with felons.

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Article published Apr 1, 2008

## **Lansing shouldn't play favorites on anti-bullying bill**

No, it is not OK to bully someone because of their sexual orientation. And if lawmakers in Lansing are going to try to come up with some new law aimed at stopping bullying, they should make sure it applies when straight students harass gay students. And yes, it should outlaw bullying based on race, religion, national origin, disability, weight and socioeconomic status.

But it should also protect from bullying harassment those who would be targeted because they are geeks, or they don't wear fashionable clothes, or don't run with the in-crowd. It is not OK to bully nerds, kids who wear braces, those who are shy, are scrawny, speak with a stutter, have strict parents, have poor hygiene, are the teacher's pet, or just plain look funny.

Kids can find any number of reasons to pick on one another. If lawmakers are going to try to address the issue of bullying, they should try to come up with a bill that addresses all bullying. It should seek to outlaw all student-on-student campaigns of harassment and physical intimidation, regardless of the cause.

Pending in Lansing is legislation, SB 107 in the Senate and HB 4162 in the House, that would deal with bullying. What the bills actually do is mandate school districts to come up with policies about what they will do when student-to-student harassment is reported.

The issue came to the forefront recently when the American Family Association of Michigan criticized Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Marion Township, for supporting the Senate bill. SB 107 defines bullying as harassment that interferes with a student's ability to participate in school, and is "based on a pupil's actual or perceived religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, height, weight, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or any other distinguishing characteristic or is based on association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics."

Gary Glenn, president of the American Family Association, argued that by including sexual orientation in the list, it would be surreptitiously advancing the agenda of granting "special rights" to gay people.

It's a silly argument. Thinking people should dismiss it out of hand. Rather, in our view, there should be no list of causes in the bill at all. If the state outlaws bullying based on race, religion, color, etc., it leaves unprotected the youngster who would be victimized because he or she is the teacher's pet.

Lawmakers who advocate the list would argue that their bill still outlaws bullying of all kinds, that the list just mentions a few easily recognized categories. But that means the student victimized due to shyness or poor hygiene has a higher standard to meet to receive protection. If it does not fall under one of the recognized categories, does it still count as bullying?

The list included in the bill could also be interpreted as a subtle form of blaming the victim. It says, yes, we will protect them, but perhaps those students would not get bullied if they were not so darned different in the first place. In fact, bullying behavior comes from the bully trying to feel superior to others. In a classroom of similar students — all the same race, all the same color, all the same religion, all the same gender — the bully would still find someone to victimize.

Of a higher concern is making sure the legislation adequately defines what bullying is. As written, the Senate bill defines bullying as conduct that interferes with educational opportunities or hurts the ability of a student to participate in school. That seems rather vague. The House bill seems better by referring to bullying as "abuse" that places "the pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm" or causes emotional distress. Lawmakers should avoid any legislation that would ban "mean looks" or the occasional snarky comment. Kids can be mean and say rude things to one another. Lawmakers should not attempt to mandate niceness on the playground.

Properly defined, anti-bullying legislation should attempt to prohibit the long-term physical intimidation that far too many students are subjected to in school these days.

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Jurors Listen Again To Key Testimony In Ex-Teacher's Retrial

POSTED: 5:37 pm EDT March 31, 2008  
UPDATED: 9:17 pm EDT March 31, 2008

**PONTIAC, Mich.** -- A key piece of testimony was replayed Monday in the retrial of a former teacher accused of sexually assaulting two children.

According to prosecutors, James Perry sexually molested two boys in an empty classroom used for special education students at Key Elementary School in Oak Park.

Perry is accused of snatching the two boys, then ages 4 and 5, from a supervised lunch line and dragging them into the special education room where he allegedly forced oral sex on the boys.

On Monday, jurors listened to the earlier testimony of special education teacher Clara Geary, who said the special ed room was always occupied and that the attacks could not have happened there.

The jurors, eight men and four women, were in their sixth day of deliberations Monday. They have indicated they are hopelessly deadlocked and earlier sent the judge a note suggesting 11 of the jurors were for acquittal and one for conviction.

Geary's testimony was considered critical to the defense. Geary and two other adults assigned to the special ed room told jurors the room was always occupied by students and teachers at lunch time because some of the students had disabilities that make it difficult to move them between rooms.

During the first trial, in 2006, Perry was convicted based only on the testimony of the two boys. Judge Denise Langford Morris overturned the decision.

In Judge Morris' ruling, she pointed out the Oak Park police never interviewed the adults or teachers assigned to the special education room, nor did police question any of the teachers assigned to the rooms facing the hallway where the alleged abduction took place.

Perry, 34, faces up to life in prison if convicted.

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### RELATED TO STORY



**Video: Jurors Listen Again To Key Testimony In Ex-Teacher's Retrial**

# 40 hours and counting as jury considers assault case

## 1 juror said to be holding up verdict

BY L.L. BRASIER and JOHN WISELY • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS • April 1, 2008

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Some of the jurors hang their heads. One, a pilot and engineer who sits in the front row, frequently puts his face in his hands.

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Juror No. 10, who has been identified at times as the lone holdout, rocks in his chair and strums his fingers on his armrest.

The eight men and four women on the James Perry sex assault trial are now in their fourth week at the Oakland County courthouse in Pontiac and completed their sixth day of deliberation Monday without a verdict.

They sit in a strange legal limbo, apparently unable to reach an agreement, but forced to continue trying by the judge. They have spent more than 40 hours together in the deliberation room, and they seem exhausted, frustrated and bored.

Monday afternoon, jurors asked to rehear the testimony of Clara Geary, a special education teacher in whose room the assaults were said to have taken place. Geary testified for the defense that her room was occupied throughout the school day.

The tape-recorded testimony ended about 5 p.m., when Judge Denise Langford Morris sent the jury home.

The courthouse does not keep statistics on lengthy deliberations, but the Perry case is one of the lengthier in recent history, and Langford Morris has shown no indication she will declare a mistrial should the jury again say it is deadlocked.

During two weeks of trial, two boys testified that Perry forced oral sex on them in an empty special education room at Oak Park's Key Elementary School in 2005. Defense witnesses testified that the room was always occupied, and Perry testified that he never had contact with the boys.

Experts say the judge may want to avoid a retrial.

"Common sense tells me it's the right thing to do," said Greg Hurley, an analyst at the National Center for State Courts and the Center for Jury Studies in Virginia. "Reaching a resolution means you wouldn't have to put everybody through it again."

A hung jury -- which automatically means a mistrial -- occurs in only about 5% of criminal cases nationwide. Of those, about half are retried. In Perry's case, that decision will be made by Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca. Gorcyca has declined to say whether he would retry Perry in the event of a mistrial.

Langford Morris has pledged to keep the jury as long as it takes.

Jury consultant Amy Singer, chief executive officer of Florida-based Trial Consultants Inc. and a nationally recognized expert on the

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=40+hours+and+counting+as+jury+considers...> 4/1/2008

psychology of jurors, said the lone holdout may not budge.

She speculates that it's now a personal issue for the juror.

"It's not going to happen after seven days," she said. "Usually, it's only a couple of hours and the person is persuaded to see the other side, especially with numbers like this."

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JAMES PERRY TRIAL

## Judge declares mistrial in former teacher's second trial

By JOHN WISELY and L.L. BRASIER • Free Press Staff Writers • April 1, 2008

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An Oakland County judge declared mistrial early this afternoon after a jury failed to reach a verdict in the case of a former Oak Park kindergarten teacher accused of raping two young boys in a special education classroom.

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After more than 40 hours of deliberation over 7 days, the jury informed Judge Denise Langford Morris that they could not agree on whether to convict or acquit James Perry, 34, of Ferndale.

“We find ourselves unable to reach a unanimous verdict,” Jury No. 11 wrote to the court in a message read in court.

Prosecutors appear likely to retry the case again. Assistant prosecutor Andrea Dean did not object to a defense motion for mistrial, but did asked the court to schedule a pre-trial hearing as soon as possible so the case can be tried for third time.

Perry was convicted in his first trial in 2006, but Langford Morris threw out that verdict after new witnesses, never interviewed by police, came forward to contest the prosecution’s theory of the case.

*Come back to Freep.com for more updates.*

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Tuesday, April 1, 2008

## Perry case declared a mistrial

**Mike Martindale / The Detroit News**

**PONTIAC** -- The sexual assault trial of a 34-year-old former kindergarten teacher has been declared a mistrial after jurors could not reach a verdict in a week of often contentious deliberations.

James Perry, 34, of Ferndale was charged with first- and second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving boys, 4 and 5 years old, at Key Elementary School in 2005. This is his second trial, following an overturned 2006 conviction.

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<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080401/METRO/804010436>

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## **BREAKING NEWS!** Mistrial declared in Perry case

### Staff reports

If prosecutors want to convict James Perry of criminal sexual conduct, they will need a third trial as the second ended this afternoon with a mistrial.

After seven days of deadlocked deliberations, Oakland County Circuit Judge Denise Langford Morris declared a mistrial, leaving Perry -- a former kindergarten teacher from the Oak Park School District -- in legal limbo.

The jurors sent out a final note saying that they had weighed all the evidence and could not reach an unanimous verdict.

Perry, 34, of Ferndale had been convicted after the first trial of first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct; however, Langford Morris set aside the verdict and ordered the new trial.

Oak Park detectives failed to interview other adults who were in the room where two boys alleged they had been assaulted. The new witnesses reported that the room -- identified by its large red couch -- was never unoccupied.

The boys, then ages 4 and 5, alleged that Perry snatched them from a lunch line, took them to the room and sexually assaulted them.

Prosecutors argued that boys could not make up details of a sexual assault and were consistent in describing what happened to them.

Defense attorneys argued that the boys' statements were inconsistent with one another and varied individually over time.

According to reports, a lone juror -- who lives near Perry -- had held on for a conviction while 11 others pressed for acquittal. It is not yet clear if Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca will press for a third trial.

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## BREAKING NEWS: Judge Declares Mistrial In Teacher Molestation Case

POSTED: 12:32 pm EDT April 1, 2008  
UPDATED: 12:42 pm EDT April 1, 2008

**OAKLAND COUNTY, Mich.** -- An Oakland County Judge has declared a hung jury in the retrial of a former Oak Park teacher accused of sexually assaulting two children.

The jurors, eight men and four women, had been deliberating since 2 p.m. last Monday. On Tuesday, they indicated they are hopelessly deadlocked and earlier sent the judge a note suggesting 11 of the jurors were for acquittal and one for conviction.

According to prosecutors, James Perry, 34, sexually molested two boys in an empty classroom used for special education students at Key Elementary School in Oak Park.

Perry is accused of snatching the two boys, then ages 4 and 5, from a supervised lunch line and dragging them into the special education room where he allegedly forced the boys to perform oral sex.

This is Perry's second trial after he was convicted in 2006 of sodomizing the boys and then granted a new trial because three key witnesses came forward after the fact.

On Monday, jurors listened to the earlier testimony of special education teacher Clara Geary, who said the special ed room was always occupied and that the attacks could not have happened there.

Geary's testimony was considered critical to the defense. Geary and two other adults assigned to the special ed room told jurors the room was always occupied by students and teachers at lunch time because some of the students had disabilities that make it difficult to move them between rooms.

Since the jury could not reach an agreement, it will be up to the Oakland County prosecutor to decide if Perry will go to trial a third time.

Stay with Local 4 News and ClickOnDetroit.com for more information on this developing story.

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## Teens Arrested For Several Break-Ins

POSTED: 6:23 pm EDT March 31, 2008

UPDATED: 7:11 pm EDT March 31, 2008

**ANN ARBOR, Mich.** -- Three teens were arrested early Monday morning in Ann Arbor, accused of breaking into several local homes.

One Ann Arbor homeowner woke up to find three teens with guns standing in his bedroom.

He screamed and they ran out of the house.

He then called 911.

Here is part of his call.

911: "Ann Arbor 911."

Victim: "I just had a robbery at my home. Someone broke into my house."

911: "While you were there?"

Victim: "Yes right."

911: "Now, did they assault you or anything?"

Victim: "Ah, no. I was sleeping and they came back into the bedroom and they turned on the light and I basically just screamed and they ran out."

911: "Ok, so did you get any kind of description of them?"

Victim: "Unfortunately no. There were just three of them."

911: "Were they all male?"

Victim: "Yes, they were all male."

That homeowner wasn't the only victim.

There were at least three others, including Mary Himlin.

Himlin lives about a block away and came home to find a rock through the glass of her backdoor.

She said, "There's glass all over the place and muddy footprints. They rifled through drawers and took my computer."

When police picked up the boys, they were carrying cash and computers.

Ann Arbor Police say the teens are from 14 to 16 years old and they might be responsible for several recent break-ins.

They will be in court Tuesday morning.

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## Businessman stole tens of thousands

**BY ART BUKOWSKI**

abukowski@record-eagle.com

LELAND -- The prominent local businessman toiled for years to earn the elderly, German immigrant's trust. A chore here, some help there, and all the while a sharp eye on the old woman's finances.

But authorities said John Sisson offered more than a helping hand. He helped himself to tens of thousands of Berta Anna Steinkamp's dollars.

Yet it was Steinkamp who drew the Leland community's scorn when police began asking about her vanishing savings.

Sisson, 54, owns Sisson's Main Street Specialties in Leland and used to own the Leelanau Country Inn on M-22 south of Leland.

"Most people knew John Sisson as a church-going business owner and a respectable member of the community ... no one could believe that this could be true," said Detective Clint Kerr of the Leelanau County Sheriff's Department. "In situations like this, I think people feel like they need to choose sides, and unfortunately they chose to side with John Sisson. Hopefully, they'll see a more accurate picture now."

Sisson pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of embezzlement from a vulnerable adult in Leelanau County District Court Friday. He will pay \$50,000 in restitution to Steinkamp, 88, who moved to Leland in 1993.

Kerr believes Sisson may have taken as much as \$203,000 from Steinkamp between 1999 and 2006 after befriending her in the early 1990s, but officials contend they can't prove that beyond a reasonable doubt and wanted a quick resolution to the case, for Steinkamp's sake.

"She needs some finality," said Doug Donaldson, Leelanau County chief assistant prosecutor. "This weighed heavily on her."

District Judge Thomas J. Phillips sent Sisson to jail pending an April sentencing. He also wanted probation officials to confirm that Steinkamp doesn't want any more than \$50,000 in restitution.

Steinkamp declined comment after Friday's plea.

Steinkamp was close to Sisson's mother-in-law, and Sisson began looking after Steinkamp's finances in the mid-1990s, officials say. He eventually gained complete control of her finances and had her bank statements sent to him.

"When I spoke with her she didn't even know where she banked," Kerr said.

Kerr's police report shows Sisson wrote checks to himself using Steinkamp's money and paid health insurance premiums and other expenses with her money. He also frequently moved her money around to different accounts and made deposits into her accounts, the report shows.

"There was a whole shell game of moving money around," Kerr said. "It wasn't as simple as taking a chunk of money from her account and putting it into his."

Sisson and his wife moved in with Steinkamp for a period, and police eventually were contacted in 2006 by hospital workers who treated Steinkamp for a slip-and-fall accident. They were suspicious because Sisson became combative when the hospital wanted to send Steinkamp home, Kerr said.

Kerr believes Sisson hoped to commit Steinkamp.

Donaldson contends Steinkamp's advanced age could have harmed her credibility on the witness stand. Both Kerr and Donaldson are satisfied with Sisson's plea.

"I think it was everybody's agreement that this is a good resolution," Kerr said.

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Article published Mar 30, 2008

## Woman faces competency review in mom's death

By Alex Lundberg  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A woman accused of pushing her elderly mother down a flight of steps to her death will have her competency to stand trial evaluated by mental health experts over the coming month.

Mary Beth Connolly, 49, of Livonia was referred for forensic evaluation to determine whether or not she is competent to stand trial at her preliminary exam Thursday. Proceedings in the case are adjourned until Monday, June 9.

Connolly was arraigned on a charge of homicide by 16th District Judge Robert Brzezinski on Tuesday, March 18. Bond was refused in the case and she will remain in the Wayne County Jail pending the results of her psychological evaluation.

According to Livonia police reports, city police found out about the elderly woman's death from the Canton Township police department.

Livonia police say the case came to their attention when Connolly called her brother, a resident of Canton Township, who called those police and it was township officers who informed Livonia police.

During the arraignment, Livonia police Detective Michael Mockeridge told the judge that Connolly confessed to pushing her mother.

The victim, 82-year-old Betty Connolly, had a history of serious medical concerns and used a walker to get around, police reported.

The police report said the daughter had apparently attempted suicide that morning before being arrested and was treated at several area hospitals before being released to Livonia police officers.

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## Celebrity soup bowls raise \$4,000 to feed the hungry

Tuesday, April 01, 2008

By Monetta L. Harr

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Sen. John McCain's signature was gold Saturday night, helping End Hunger in Jackson raise more than \$4,000 in its first Bountiful Bowls soup supper and fundraiser.

McCain, the Republican candidate for president, was in Jackson last year and signed three bowls, two of which were auctioned at St. John Catholic Church, 711 N. Francis St.

One raised \$350 and the other just over \$300.

An area man who was at McCain's speech at Under the Oaks Park asked to have the third bowl and promised to donate as much or more than the highest bid on the bowls, according to Janet Jaeger, co-chairwoman of the event with Patricia Robinson.

"We were very, very pleased for our first effort," she said.

Not only did the women get Jackson-area residents to pay \$10 per bowl and paint them at the Ceramic Cafe, 3634 McCain Road, then donate them to the silent auction, but they netted more than a dozen celebrity signatures.

"The celebrities raised about \$2,000," said Jaeger, adding Thrivent Financial, a Lutheran fraternal financial group, gave \$750 in matching funds.

A large pasta bowl with colorful tulips painted by Cathy Iocca Stephenson, owner of the Ceramic Cafe and a similar store in Grand Haven, was auctioned and raised \$300.

A smaller bowl painted by Sarah Davis, a Jackson artist who also created the poster for the event, with the Mackinac Bridge in the bottom of the bowl and a lighthouse and birch trees on the outside, raised more than \$100.

About 75 attended and ate two soups donated by Bella Notte Ristorante, 137 W. Michigan Ave., and Daryl's Downtown, 151 W. Michigan Ave. The bread was donated by Panera Bread, 1285 Boardman Road, and desserts provided by the St. John's Singles Group.

The money will be given to area food pantries and the Back Pack program at McCulloch Academy of Science and Technology.

"We're already planning next year's event," Jaeger said.

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## Muskegon Chronicle Editorial

March 31, 2008

### FROM THE MIDLAND DAILY NEWS

Michigan is in line to become the first state in the nation to issue food stamps twice a month. ... The state also is seeking a waiver from the federal government, seeking to get around a provision in the 2007 Farm Bill that prohibits states from distributing federal food assistance funds more than once monthly.

We believe issuing food assistance payments twice a month is a good idea. Ideally, it would help people extend their buying power well into the month, allowing them to buy fresh produce and meat at least twice a month.

Retailers say the current once-a-month checks are spent early in the month and usually all at once, causing them problems with staffing, cash flow and inventory, The Associated Press has reported. The retailers say the twice-a-month allotment would help them keep fresher foods in the store. It also would help families move toward a healthier lifestyle.

The Department of Human Services has resisted the change ... but (its proposed) 20-day plan, while helping retailers, does nothing to help people keep fresher produce, meats and dairy in the house. It does nothing to encourage people to live a healthier lifestyle.

The twice-a-month plan makes sense to us and if the DHS is about providing service, then it should make sense to them, too.



Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Janice Berry (517) 373-7394

## **Four individuals, three teams feted with Star Awards by Michigan Department of Human Services represent 45 communities around Michigan**

April 1, 2008

Four individuals and three teams earned Star Awards from Michigan Department of Human Services. The awards were presented during the department's annual employee award program April 1 in Lansing. The winners represent 45 different communities around the state.

"Star Award winners represent the best and brightest," DHS Director Ismael Ahmed said. "These people go above and beyond to help coworkers, their clients and the public better access benefits in our system. They help define the DHS as an engine for good in Michigan."

The Star Award program is an annual employee recognition program started in

2007. Award winners were nominated by peers and/or managers for outstanding

service to clients, coworker and partners. Individual winners include:

- Cynthia Gill Pushman, from Gaylord, the director of Otsego-Crawford DHS.
- Karen Sue Foster, from Sandusky, community resource coordinator with Sanilac-Lapeer DHS.
- William Melcher, from Newaygo, a Family to Family coordinator with Mecosta-Osceola DHS.
- Annmarie Eggert, from Williamston, a case specialist with DHS Disability Determination Service in Lansing.

Team awards were presented to three teams. The two-member Oakland County

Personal Care-Household Item Resource Team helped establish a personal care

inventory for DHS clients going to job interviews. Team members are:

- Colleen R. Coery from Royal Oak.
- Adam Paul Schultz from Waterford.

The 17-member Making It Work Program Team from Kalamazoo County that work

with local agencies to provide housing stability and homelessness avoidance for clients. The team's members are:

- Sherry Thomas Cloud, Sandy Lemley, Jen denOtter, Jeaninne Systsema, Michael Childress and Jane King from Kalamazoo.
- Valerie McNutt, Kathy Smyser and Galyn Barnum from Portage.
- Angela Easterday from Eaton Rapids.
- Kerrie Jackson from Plainwell.
- Russ Surbrook from Parchment.
- Beverly Barrone from Gobles.
- Denise Kubiszak from Paw Paw.
- Julie Stebbin from Three Rivers.
- Ellen Kissinger-Rothi from Lawton.
- John Dillworth from Richland.

The 80-member Bridges Test Team tested applications on the upcoming Bridges

eligibility and payment program to determine its fit for employees and to help debug problems before the computerized application goes online. Team members are listed alphabetically by hometown:

- James Criste from Adrian.
- Larry Rogers from Alanson.
- Cindy Shackleton from Alpena.
- Kelly Brandt from Battle Creek.
- Ted Sell from Bellaire.
- Gina M. Goss from Bessemer.
- Sharon K. Dulek from Big Rapids.
- Mark Anderson and Ted Pfeiffer from Brighton.
- Joann Schwarz from Cadillac.
- Dan Ellis from Caledonia.

- Dan Bauer, Joan Lamoreaux, Linda Martinez and Sue Fassett from Charlotte.
- Pamela George and Michelle Tanzy from Dearborn.
- Joy Howard and Kimberly Noles-Rollins from Detroit.
- Carol Kraklan from DeWitt.
- Lancea Daly and Charlene Watters from Dimondale.
- Fidelia Notman from East Lansing.
- Roeiah Epps from Eastpointe.
- Pam Hartenburg, Cathy Jones and Nancy Jackson from Eaton Rapids.
- Dennise Grant from Farwell.
- Gary A. Johnson from Flint.
- Beverly A. Nehls from Flushing.
- Laura Dockham from Freeland.
- Denise Bielski from Garden City.
- Melinda Thompson from Grand Ledge.
- James McHoskey and Dianna Schaafsma from Grand Rapids.
- Bridget Ludwig from Granger, Ind.
- Tina M. Williams from Hastings.
- Colleen Cadena from Haslett.
- Marlene Forsyth from Holland.
- Antonio Baldwin and Mave Coxon from Holt.
- MiWha Clark from Huntington Woods.
- Vanola A. Williams from Inkster.
- Lois Krieger from Ionia.
- Jo Adams from Jackson.
- Merry Stuard from Jerome.
- Lindsey DeLeo, Kevin James Miller and Gayla Norris from Kalamazoo.
- Barbel DeWitt, Sylvia McCoy, Judy Miller, David Putnam, Linda Rose, Daphne Shane, Phil Tobin, Delia Vallejo and Jean Lantzer-Brailey from Lansing.
- Edwin Dinkgrave from Livonia.
- Mary Iott and Andrea Putnam from Mason.
- Alan Wikman from Marquette.
- Richard Rapparlief from Mattawan.
- Desiree DeCaire from Montrose.
- Brant Cole from Onstead.
- Abbey Brooks and Cynthia Eberhard from Perrinton.
- Kelly Morse from Perry.
- Amy Assante from Petoskey.
- Diane Bush from Portland.

- Janice Mack-Walker from Romulus.
- Cindy Mey from Saginaw.
- Jamie Byerly from Shelbyville.
- Vanessa M. Mauldin and Sheila Barbour from Southfield.
- Robert Drake, Dawn Wolven and RoseMary Nobach from St. Johns.
- Janet Holmstrom from Stockbridge.
- Leslie A. Fall from West Branch.

Some award winners are not listed based on their preference.

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